

ABSTRACT

A shipping container is made with a bottom and walls of a first rigid material and hinges connect the walls that are made of a second, flexible material. The hinge material is fused to the bottom and walls so that there are no crevices to collect contaminants. The container has an erect position in which the walls extend upward from the bottom, and it can be knocked down by folding the walls outward until they are splayed out from the bottom or inward until they lie flat on top of the bottom. The sides and bottom include structural elements that engage each other when the container is in the erect position to transfer loads between the sides and the bottom and so relieve the hinges of carrying such loads. This arrangement allows the hinges to be flexible and elastic. When the container is knocked down with the walls spread outward from the base, it can be cleaned easily before reuse because there are no enclosed areas such as around conventional hinges that use hinge pins to retain hidden contaminants. The container is held in its erect position by a band or strap surrounding the upper perimeter of the erect container. The band may be cut and discarded to knock the container down. When the sides are folded inward onto the bottom, the container is compact, facilitating return shipment of the empty, knocked down container.

TOP SECRET